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FILE ONLY

CIA chief upset over press leaks

Says stories violate 1950 security law

By Tony Mauro
USA TODAY

The Reagan administration appeared to be cracking down on press leaks Wednesday — but officials wouldn't say if media prosecutions were likely:

■ The Justice Department was "considering" complaints by CIA Director William Casey that five news outlets violated a 1950 law by disclosing classified information in reports on Libyan terrorism and other matters.

■ Casey threatened *The Washington Post* with prosecution if it published another story — said to involve accused spy Ronald Pelton — that included classified information.

■ The Justice Department denied reports that it was considering legal action against NBC News for its interview with terrorist Abu Abbas, suspected mastermind of the Achille Lauro hijacking.

NBC kept Abbas' location secret in exchange for the interview in which he called President Reagan "enemy No. 1." Robert Oakley, head of the State Department's anti-terrorism unit, said the deal made NBC an "accomplice" of terrorists.

Casey raised complaints with *Post* editors last week after the *Post* and *Newsweek* reported on U.S. intercepts of messages between Tripoli and the Libyan People's Bureau in East Berlin. He also said *The Washington Times*, *The New York Times*, and *Time* magazine could be prosecuted for unspecified stories.

But Michael Gartner, president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, said he was "appalled" when he read of the possible press probes.

Noting that President Reagan spoke publicly of intercepted Libyan terrorist communications, Gartner said: "What possible additional peril did *The Washington Post* bring to the situation?"

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